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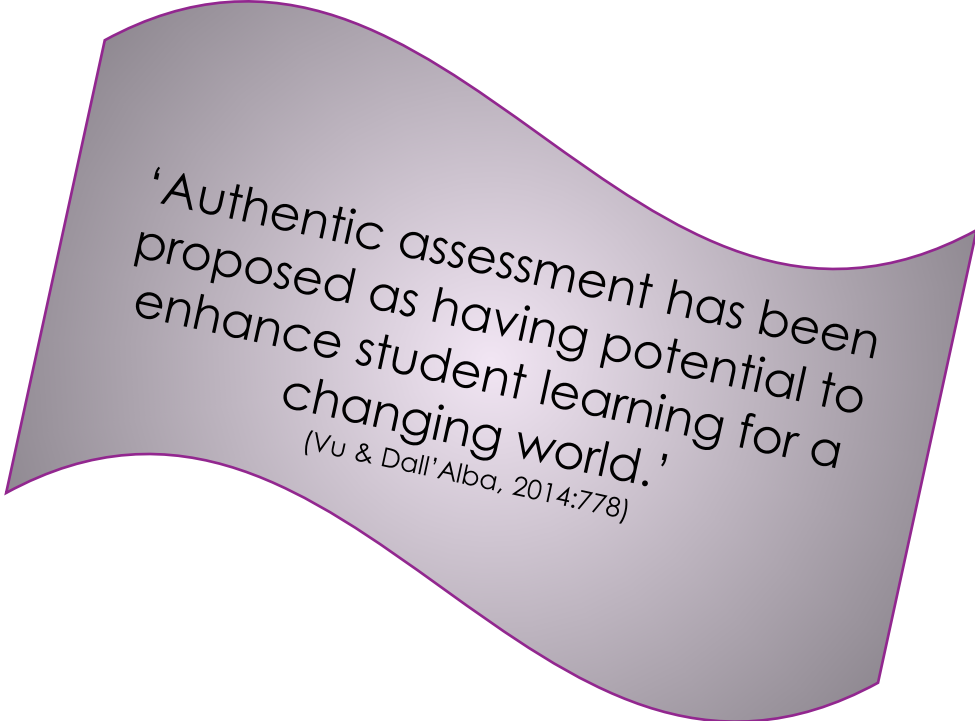
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# Closing the GAP: Addressing Educational Inequality through Authentic Assessment

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&  
Tina Harvey

6<sup>th</sup> International AHE  
Conference, Manchester  
28<sup>th</sup> & 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017



'Authentic assessment has been proposed as having potential to enhance student learning for a changing world.'

(Vu & Dall'Alba, 2014:778)

# WIDENING PARTICIPATION



**Knight & Yorke** (2003:10) 'Higher education institutions around the world are expected not only to continue to promote deep understandings of complex subject matter, but also:

- to work with cohorts of students from a diversity of backgrounds;
- to pay more attention to teaching, learning and assessment; and
- to support the development in students of broad ranges of skills relevant to employment.'

**Biggs & Tang** (2007:180) '..... the assessment tasks need to represent the knowledge to be learned in a way that is authentic to real life.'

**Biggs & Tang** (2007:181-2) '.....the assessment task should require students to do more than just tell us what they know.'



## Regional Context

- The North West of England has one of the highest NEET populations (aged 16-24) equating to 14% of all young people in the region (Department for Education, 2016).
- Deprivation hotspots in the North West: Blackpool, Liverpool, Manchester, Lancashire and West Cumbria.
- A high percentage of students registering on programmes at non-traditional HEI's are defined as economically disadvantaged (e.g. 61-65% at UoC) and a proportion have overcome significant challenges to re-engage with formal education following ESL/NEET experiences.

# Lancashire

- Lancashire broadly: in the most deprived 10 per cent of areas nationally according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015).
- Lancaster and Morecambe specifically: Heysham North, Harbour, Poulton, Westgate, Skerton East, are amongst the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.
- Skerton West, Castle and Bulk wards (Marsh and Ridge) are amongst the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country.
- UoC's student population comprises an increasing proportion of students from lower socio-economic groups (41.3%) and from low participating neighbourhoods (20.5%).

## WP stats for WCF Carlisle

- Based on the home addresses of our current 1<sup>st</sup> year cohort and using data from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015):
- 29% of students live in the most deprived 10% of areas nationally;
- 29% of students live in the most deprived 20% of areas nationally;
- 17% of students live in the most deprived 30% of areas nationally.

## European Context:

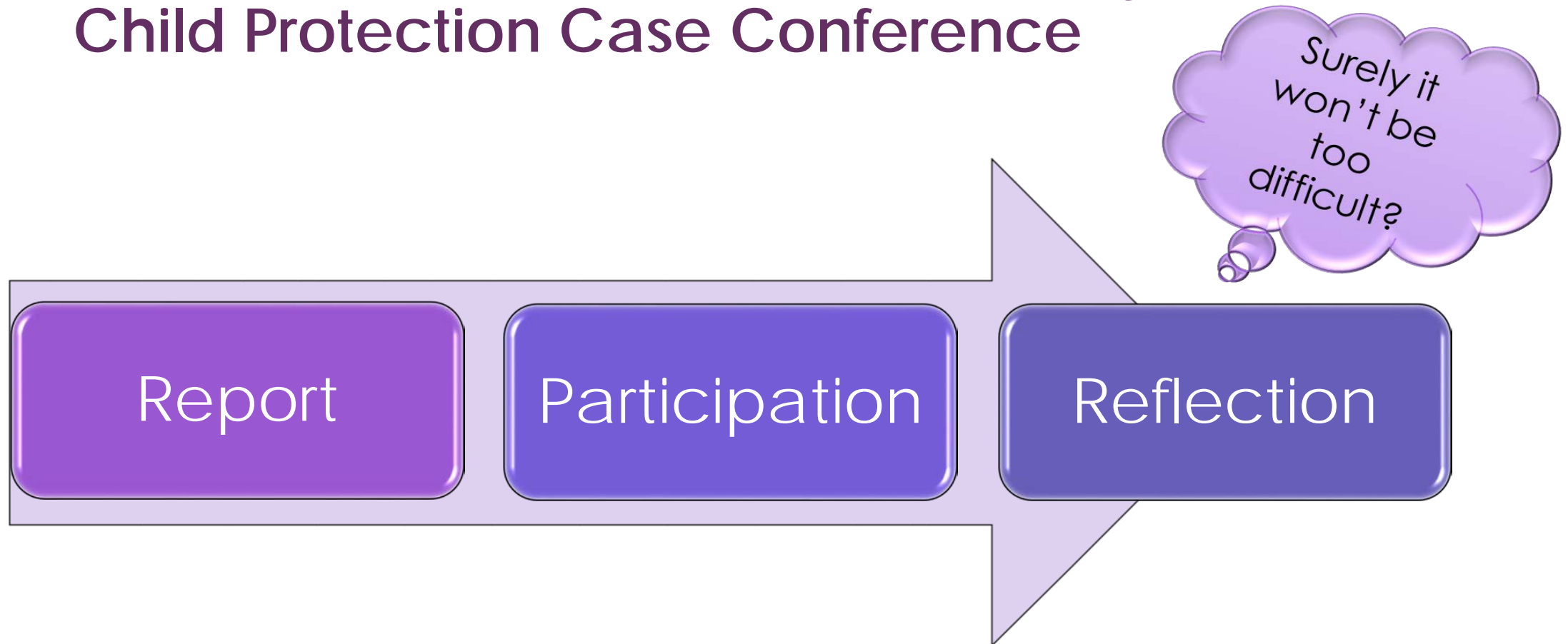
- NEET and ESL are associated with long-term negative outcomes in international studies and are the focus of current policy concerns across Europe (Europe, 2020).
- Youth unemployment rates within the EU area (20% in January 2017).
- Young people are key policy focus (aged 20+ who are Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) (Eurostat, 2017).
- Recent EU dataset: 18.9% of young people (aged 20-34) were defined as NEET, compared to 6.3% (aged 15-19) engaged in education or training (Eurostat, 2016).
- The Europe 2020 Strategy makes a very clear appeal to HEI's to modernise curricula and play an active role in closing the inequality gap by ensuring non-traditional students are supported to acquire skills and qualifications.

## Success is Possible!

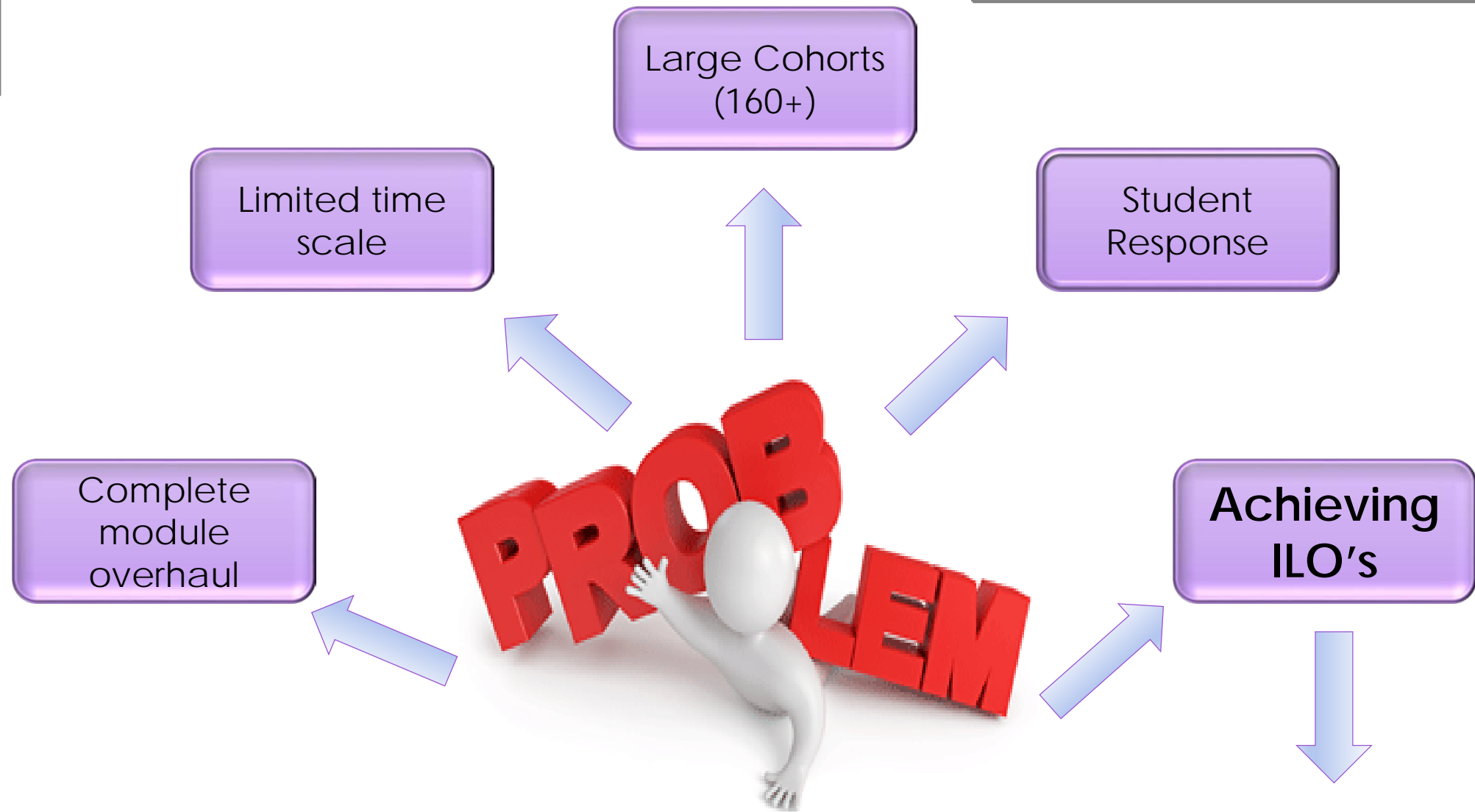
- Experiencing economic disadvantage does not equate to academic failure.
- Many of our students complete the programme and are a credit to UoC.
- However, the right mix of academic and pastoral support, combined with support from professional services needs to be in place.
- Modernising the curricula on vocational programmes can also improve outcomes.
- We would like to share our recent experience of 'authentic assessment' with you to bring to highlight the possibilities and some of the challenges!



# New Assessment Structure: Role-Play an Initial Child Protection Case Conference



**TULBURE** (2012: 65) '..... learning is not so much the acquisition or transmission of content, as it represents the interaction between content and experience, where each transforms the other. In this context, the teacher has not only to transmit new ideas but also to modify old ideas that may get in the way of new ones.'



**Knight & Yorke** (2003:98) 'There are also concerns that assessment claimed to be authentic may not properly probe depth of understanding, which may be assumed to be sufficient if students merely demonstrate that they can succeed in the specified task.'



**Bloxham & Boyd** (2007:143) 'Social integration and developing a sense of 'belonging' to the course and institution can be assisted by the use of group assessments.'

**Fisher, Frey & Everlove** (2009:3) 'Educators have understood the importance of collaborative group learning for decades. A large body of research shows that students involved in cooperative work demonstrate higher levels of academic learning and retention than their peers working individually.'

I Am Upset About This



Tina



What if this  
goes  
wrong?

Rhona



When will  
they stop  
complaining?

Stop worrying  
so much and  
have faith that  
things will  
work out.

*LiveLifeHappy.com*

## Level 6 Student comments after the meeting



"OMG ..... Why was I so worried? That was great!!!"



"That was so much better than I expected. What a good experience."



"OK, now I see why you said to relax and stop over-thinking it. It was a doddle."



# Can we improve for the next cohort?

**Biggs** (2003:254) 'Reflection is often not best carried out alone.....It is helpful to have a critical friend.....Your own reflections are sharpened if shared with someone with a different perspective.'

We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience.

- John Dewey



Learning without reflection is a waste. Reflection without learning is dangerous.

Confucius

meetville.com

Rhona & Tina

Students

Colleagues



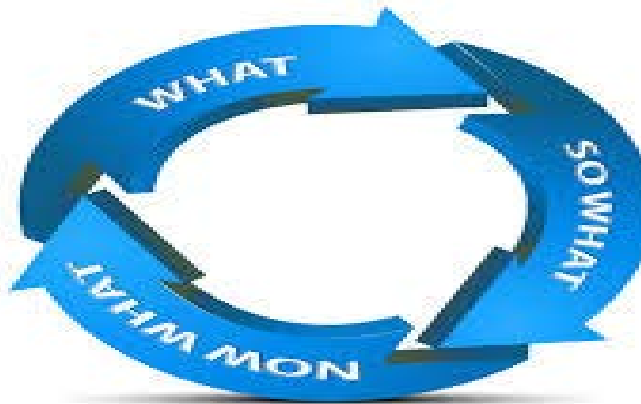
Sustainable Assessments  
(Boud & Soler, 2015)

Smaller Cohort  
Groups

New  
Professional  
Roles

Case Study  
not  
SCR

Improved  
Rubric



Change to  
summative  
assessment

## Adapting teaching practice further for 2017/18: Sustainable Assessment

- **Is our current teaching practice effectively preparing students for life in the workplace?**
- Authentic assessment is good academic practice, but more can be done to promoting sustainable assessment opportunities.



# International Collaboration:

- UoC, USN, VIA (and local Associate Partners) – collaboration on Erasmus + bid.
- Builds on the 'indirect approach' methodology developed at USN (Moshuus and Eide, 2016) and 'deprivation literacy' theory developed at UoC (O'Brien, 2017).
- Project offers a considered response to EU policy concerns by prioritising the social aspects of HE and training, and by ensuring that equal opportunities for access to further education are provided.
- By re-designing curricula to include marginalized students transnationally, participating HEI's will actively promote 'social cohesion, sustainable development, active citizenship and personal fulfilment in European societies' for young people at significant risk of social exclusion (Rethinking Education, 2013).
- This project engages transnational and regional partnerships to embed work-based/ vocational skills.
- Through validating the knowledge and insights of student co-researchers, defined previously as 'low-achievers', the project supports them to acquire advanced research and practitioner skills working with younger ESL/NEET cohorts.
- The project has been designed to model social inclusion within our own HEI's and promote this approach within local communities.

**THANK YOU FOR  
LISTENING**



**ANY QUESTIONS?**

memegenerator.net

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